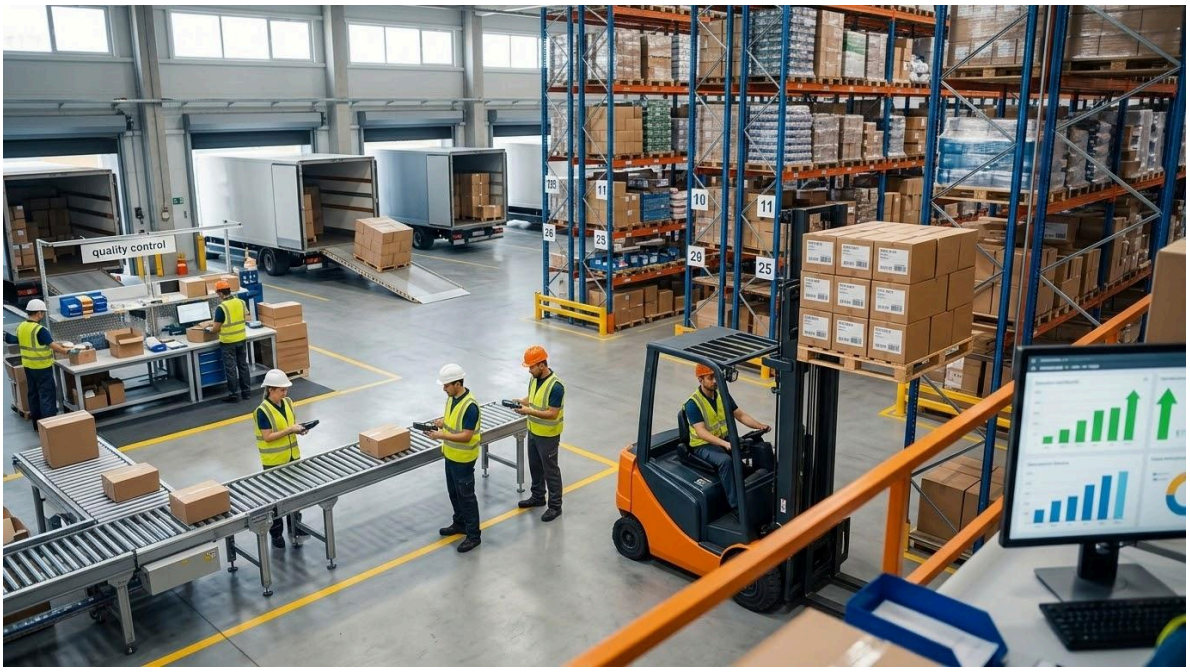
What to Look for in Warehouse Services for Growing Businesses



Professional **warehouse services** cover 5 functions: receiving, storage, inventory management, order fulfillment, and outbound shipping. A provider that handles all 5 eliminates the gap between when goods arrive and when they reach your customers. For growing businesses, the decision between dedicated warehouse space and a **3PL warehouse** comes down to volume predictability - if your storage needs fluctuate more than 25 percent month to month, flexible 3PL space almost always costs less than a fixed lease.

Key Takeaways

- Full-service warehouse services cover receiving, storage, inventory management, fulfillment, and outbound shipping
- A 3PL warehouse charges by pallet or square foot used - you pay for space consumed, not space reserved
- Real-time inventory management system access is non-negotiable for any modern warehousing partner
- Temperature-controlled, hazmat, and high-value storage capabilities vary significantly between providers
- Location relative to your customers and carriers affects last-mile delivery cost more than the storage rate itself

What Full-Service Warehouse Services Include

Not all **warehouse services** providers offer the same scope. The 5 core functions of a full-service warehousing operation are:

- **Receiving and unloading:** inbound freight inspection, damage documentation, and put-away into designated storage locations. Good providers complete receiving and system entry within 24 hours of truck arrival
- **Storage management:** organized inventory placement by SKU, lot, or project with clear location labeling and aisle accessibility for efficient picking
- **Inventory management system access:** real-time visibility into stock levels, lot numbers, and location data through a client portal or WMS integration - you should never have to call to ask what is in stock
- **Order fulfillment and kitting:** pick, pack, and ship operations for individual orders or bulk shipments, including custom packaging, labeling, and quality inspection if required
- **Outbound shipping coordination:** carrier selection, rate shopping, label generation, and manifest creation for both parcel and LTL outbound shipments

When a 3PL Warehouse Makes More Sense Than Owned Space

A **3PL warehouse** - third-party logistics warehouse - charges based on actual space used, typically priced per pallet position or per square foot per month. This variable cost model makes 3PL warehousing significantly more efficient than a fixed lease for businesses with seasonal volume, growing SKU counts, or unpredictable order patterns.

A 3PL warehouse is the right choice in 4 situations:

- **Seasonal volume swings above 25 percent:** paying for peak capacity year-round in owned space wastes money during off-peak months
- **Geographic expansion testing:** placing inventory in a 3PL near a new customer base lets you test market demand without signing a multi-year lease in an unfamiliar market
- **FF&E and project-based storage:** furniture, fixtures, and equipment that need to be staged and coordinated for installation require specialized project logistics that standard self-storage cannot provide
- **Capital preservation:** warehouse buildout, racking, forklifts, and WMS software require significant upfront capital - 3PL services convert those fixed costs to variable operating expenses

Key Questions to Ask a Warehouse Services Provider

- **What is your receiving turnaround time?** inventory that sits unprocessed in a receiving area creates fulfillment delays and blind spots in your stock count - confirm the SLA
- **Do you provide real-time inventory visibility?** any modern warehouse services provider gives clients direct WMS portal access - if they send spreadsheet updates by email, that is a red flag
- **What security and insurance standards apply to stored inventory?** confirm CCTV coverage, access control, fire suppression, and whether your inventory is covered under their cargo policy or you need separate coverage
- **How do you handle damaged or discrepant inventory?** ask for their documented receiving discrepancy process - how damage is flagged, photographed, and escalated to the carrier or shipper

- **What are your minimum commitment terms?** some 3PL warehouses require 3-month or 6-month minimum commitments - confirm whether month-to-month is available for your volume level

Conclusion

The right **warehouse services** partner handles your inventory from receiving through outbound shipping with real-time visibility and flexible capacity that scales with your business. For companies managing FF&E projects, seasonal inventory, or geographic expansion, a 3PL warehouse eliminates the fixed overhead of owned space without sacrificing control. Pure Logistic Services provides warehouse management and fulfillment services as part of a full logistics operation. **Contact Pure Logistic Services today** to discuss your storage and fulfillment needs.

FAQs

Q-1: What are warehouse services and what do they include?
Warehouse services are third-party storage and fulfillment operations that receive your inventory, store it in organized, tracked locations, manage stock levels in real time, pick and pack orders, and coordinate outbound shipping. Full-service warehouse providers handle the entire product lifecycle from inbound freight receipt through customer delivery, including returns processing and inventory reporting.

Q-2: What is the difference between a warehouse and a 3PL warehouse?
A standard warehouse is a storage facility - it stores goods but typically does not manage fulfillment, carrier selection, or inventory systems. A 3PL warehouse is a third-party logistics operation that combines storage with fulfillment, inventory management, outbound shipping, and often freight coordination. The 3PL model charges based on space used and services consumed rather than a fixed lease rate.

Q-3: How much do warehouse services cost?
Warehouse services are typically priced in 3 components: storage (per pallet position per month, usually $12 to $30 depending on market and spec), handling (per inbound pallet received and per outbound order picked and shipped), and value-added services (kitting, labeling, inspection). Request an itemized rate card for all 3 components rather than a single per-unit price, which can obscure the total cost at your actual volume levels.

Q-4: How do I know if my inventory is safe in a 3PL warehouse?
Confirm the 3PL warehouse has 24-hour CCTV coverage with recorded footage, electronic access control on all entry points, a fire suppression system meeting NFPA standards, and pest control documentation. Ask whether your inventory is covered under their cargo legal liability policy or whether you need to purchase separate inland marine coverage. Reputable providers supply certificates of insurance on request.

Q-5: What is a WMS and do I need it for warehouse services?
A Warehouse Management System (WMS) is the software that tracks every inventory movement - receipts, putaways, picks, and shipments - in real time. Any warehouse services provider you work with should give you direct access to their WMS client portal so you can check stock levels, run

inventory reports, and view order status without calling or emailing. If a provider cannot offer real-time inventory visibility, they are not operating at the standard required for modern supply chain management.